



SEATTLE'S TOTEM POLES

By Viola Garfield



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Seattle's Totem Poles
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By Viola Garfield



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T

he Seattle totem pole represents one of the most unusual types of craftsmanship in the world.

Carved only in the Pacific Northwest, notably by the Tlingit of southeastern Alaska and the Haida and Tsimshian of western Canada, totem poles can rise to heights of sixty feet: vertical legends of the tribe embodied in ravens, whales, frogs, and other creatures.

Seattle's totem pole came from the Tlingit village of Tongass. The original pole belonged to a Tlingit lineage of the Raven clan, known in English as the Kininook family. It was erected in front of the lineage house in honor of a woman called Chief-of-All-Women, who drowned in the Nass River while on her way to visit a sister who was ill. As was customary, her brothers and sisters and other lineage members planned a memorial for her. They hired a carver and told him the stories they wanted represented on a pole. When the pole was completed, the lineage organized a potlatch and the pole was erected in the name of Chief-of-All-Women. It is one of few poles dedicated to a woman; most were carved in honor of deceased chiefs who traditionally were men.

In 1899 a group of Seattle businessmen chartered a ship for a tour in the south of Alaska. On their way home to Seattle they stopped at Tongass, which appeared to be deserted. They did not know that all the able-bodied men were out salmon fishing and that the women were away working in the canneries which processed the fish for shipment south. Only the elderly and small children remained in the village.

Admiring the unusual poles, the men decided to take one back to Seattle as a souvenir. Completely disregarding the fact that the Indians owned the pole and that it was a memorial to an ancestor, they went ashore, sawed it down, and floated it to their ship. In doing so, they broke the beak on the bottom figure, and since no one later remembered the original design, the beak was not reconstructed in its traditional shape.

RAVEN-AT-THE-HEAD-OF-NASS, BOTTOM

FIGURE ON THE SEATTLE TOTEM POLE.

Courtesy Photo Collection,

University of Washington Library







AN ARTIST'S VIEW OF PIONEER SQUARE DURING THE 1890S.
Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

Although the sponsors of the touring party were eventually fined for the theft, the pole nevertheless remained to become a treasured landmark in Seattle. It was placed in Pioneer Square in an official dedication on October 18, 1899, where it stood until damaged by fire in October of 1938. When it was removed for inspection, it was found to be too greatly damaged by dry rot for repair. In order not to lose this famed historic artwork, familiar to pioneers and newcomers alike, the Seattle City Council and the Park Board began to investigate the possibility of having it copied.

In 1938 the United States Forest Service was directing the restoration of poles by native craftsmen in southeastern Alaska. When the regional forester in charge of the work heard of the damage to the Seattle pole, he offered to undertake duplication of the pole by Tlingit carvers working in his program. Since no carvers were available in Seattle, the pole was shipped to the Forest Service work-



shop in Saxman, two miles from Ketchikan, where the copy was made under the direction of Charles Brown, a skilled Tlingit craftsman. His father, William H. Brown, gave the final adzed surface texturing to the pole. The chief helpers were James Starfish, Robert Harris, William Andrews, and James Andrews, all Tlingit carvers, some closely related to the lineage to which the pole belonged.

The tree itself came from Kina Cove, an arm of Kasaan Bay in southeastern Alaska, and was seventy feet long with a thirty-inch-wide top. More durable than hemlock, from which the original was made, the timber for the new pole was red cedar. This cedar was graciously donated for the Seattle pole by James Peele, a Haida who had selected the tree to carve a duplicate of a pole for his father, Chief Sonihat of Old Kasaan. The log was towed to the workshop at Saxman, where it was cut to fifty-six feet in length, the bark and sapwood removed, and the pole trimmed to symmetrical



THE NEW TRIANGLE WITH ITS SINGLE TREE IN THE PIONEER SQUARE DISTRICT AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF 1889.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

shape, ready for the carvers. The bottom of the pole was four and one-half feet in diameter with a six-foot base, making the carved section fifty feet long.

Native types of long-handled adzes and knives fitted with steel blades were used throughout construction. After the head carver had marked out and roughed in the figures, other carvers worked in the main outlines. As many as ten men worked on the pole for short intervals during the early stages of the work, taking great care to copy the body curves, postures, and facial expressions of the figures on the original pole. Older men, with long experience in carving, gave advice and, using an adze, put the delicate and intricate details on the pole. The surface of the pole was finished with a pattern of regularly placed adze marks, an effect that could be achieved with no other tool.

When the carving was completed, many coats of wood preservative were applied. The early carvers



had not devised methods for preserving wood and used paint only for emphasis of detail, leaving the main bodies of the poles natural wood. Over the years the original Seattle pole had been covered with successive coats of paint in decidedly non-Tlingit colors and patterns in an attempt to preserve it. The new pole, however, was painted with native colors of black, red, and bluish green, to resemble the original at the time of its removal from Tongass. The brick red of the ochre and the bluish green shades of the copper paints of native manufacture were duplicated as closely as possible in commercial paint, since the native paints, whose binder was the oil chewed out of salmon or herring eggs, were no longer being made.

Three months of work transformed the tree into the finished pole, ready for shipment to Seattle. Because the timber for the pole had come from Forest Service land, and the carvers had been



**TOTEM POLES IN THE VILLAGE OF TONGASS, ALASKA,
CA. 1899. POLE AT FAR RIGHT WAS REMOVED TO SEATTLE
IN THAT YEAR.** Courtesy National Archives, Records of the Fish
and Wildlife Service (22-FA-216)

paid by the government, a special act of Congress was required to transfer ownership from the United States Forest Service to the City of Seattle. In Seattle the pole was raised in Pioneer Square where the old pole had stood, and was acknowledged by speeches and a gathering of businessmen and representatives of the mayor's office. The fifty-foot imposing column, centrally placed, has added greatly to the distinctive character and charm of Pioneer Square. The land now occupied by the pole was, in the 1870s, a wide open area known as Occidental Square. It was the lively scene of circuses, impromptu games, and informal gatherings. In 1889 an overheated glue pot in a basement carpentry shop on Front Street (now First Avenue) set off the city's great fire, which decimated the many wooden buildings and left the streets surrounding the Square in desolation. The rebuilding, which began immediately, included a small park for flowers in the middle of the Square. The triangular plot of grass remained empty for several years, until the arrival of the totem pole in 1899, and eventually benches for people to wait for the street cars and a watering trough for horses were added. The Square over the years has matured into a gracious and comfortable public park.



LEGENDS SYMBOLIZED

Totem poles are always read from the top downward. The topmost figure identifies the owner; on the Seattle pole this figure is Raven. In his beak he holds the crescent moon. Other characters on the pole are a woman holding her frog child, the woman's frog husband, Mink, Raven, and Whale with a seal in his mouth. And, finally, at the base of the pole is Raven-at-the-Head-of-Nass, also called Grandfather of Raven.

Three main legends belonging to the lineage are illustrated on the pole. The first is represented by the topmost and the lowest figures and is the tale of the ancient mythological era of Tlingit life.

One day Raven decided to get the daylight for the world. He started at the mouth of the Nass River. Near there he met a party of half-humans fishing. He asked them for food. They jeered him, saying, "We know you are only the trickster Raven." Raven walked on up the river. When he came to the Supernatural's house he asked to see the chief. The slaves turned him away as they also recognized him as Trickster.

Raven retired to a nearby lake and sat down to think. He knew that the chief's daughter came

UNVEILING THE ORIGINAL POLE IN PIONEER SQUARE,
SEATTLE, OCTOBER 18, 1899.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library





INSTALLING THE NEW TOTEM POLE, 1940.

*Courtesy Photo, Museum of History and Industry,
Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection*







to the lake for her drinking water. He turned himself into a bit of dirt and floated on the lake. Soon the princess came with her drinking basket and her slave. She dipped a basket of water and saw the bit of dirt, which she promptly threw out. Raven sat down and thought some more. He then turned himself into a hemlock needle, which is almost transparent in the water, and waited. The next time the princess came down for a drink he floated into the basket and she did not notice him. She drank the needle and swallowed it. It was soon apparent that she was pregnant. The chief called his wisest men, but they could give him no explanation. She gave birth to a son, Raven.

The baby grew fast and was soon crawling about. His grandfather thought a great deal of him and let him play with everything he wanted. One day little Raven cried for the box containing the moon and would not be quieted until it was given to him. He played with it on the floor for awhile, then broke the box open and the moon rose and floated out through the smokehole into the sky, where it has been ever since.

Later Raven cried for the box in which the sun was stored. He cried for a very long time until he became ill. Finally the grandfather said, "Bring my child here." They handed Raven to his grandfather. Then his grandfather said to him, "My grandchild, I am giving you the last thing I have in the world." So he gave him the box containing the sun. Little Raven rolled it around on the floor, awaiting his chance. When the smokehole was open he picked up the box, changed into bird form, and flew away. He was covered with soot as he flew through the smokehole (and so all ravens are now black).

He walked down the Nass River and again met the animal-people fishing on the shore. He again asked them for food and they again mocked him. He then opened the box and let the sunlight out. The animal-people were so frightened that they tried to escape. Those dressed in animal skins ran into the woods and became land animals.

PIONEER SQUARE IN THE EARLY 1900S.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

**CHARLES BROWN, HEAD CARVER FOR THE NEW
SEATTLE POLE, AND HIS FATHER, STANDING BESIDE
THE OLD SEATTLE TOTEM POLE AT SAXMAN.**

*Courtesy Photo Collection, University
of Washington Library*







LOADING THE NEW POLE ON S.S. TANANA IN SAXMAN FOR SHIPMENT TO SEATTLE, APRIL 1940. *Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library*

Those in bird feathers flew into the trees and became birds and those in fish skins dove into the water and changed into fish. Only those who were naked stayed on land and became people.

A second tale symbolized on the pole is another episode in the adventures of Raven, the trickster-culture hero. This Raven stands on the tail of a blackfish, or whale, carved head down, with prominent dorsal fin and the blowhole shown as a face with open mouth. Pectoral fins are carved on either side of the blackfish, and he holds a seal in his mouth.

Raven was always hungry. One day he was standing on the beach and he saw a whale. That gave him an idea. He gathered firewood and stones with which to strike fire and the next time the whale rose he dove into its mouth. In its stomach he built a fire. When the whale swallowed fish he cooked it over his fire. If there were more fish than he could eat he cut them up and hung them about to dry. When he did not get enough fish to satisfy his

voracious appetite he cut slices of fat from the whale's stomach.

Finally he became tired of his journeying about, so he cut out the whale's heart and killed him. When the whale was dead, Raven began to sing, "Let the whale go ashore. Let the whale go ashore on a long sandy beach." They then drifted ashore and Raven again sang, "Let someone cut the whale open and let me out." People living nearby had seen the whale drifting ashore and came down to cut it up for oil and meat. When they heard Raven singing they cut the whale open and he escaped. He was very dirty and covered with grease. He flew away and preened himself so he is now very sleek and glossy. Raven came back later and frightened the people away from the whale by telling them that they would all die if they ate it. He stayed until he had consumed all the meat and oil himself. Then he set off for further adventures.





POLES ADORNING OLD KASAAN VILLAGE.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

This is an often-told tale. In one version Raven tried to steal food from Whale and was swallowed by mistake. When Raven complained of hunger, Whale told him to cut out pieces of fat, taking care not to touch his heart. Raven, in his greed, did not heed the caution and killed his host. According to another version of the tale, Mink accompanied Raven on this venture, hence his appearance on the pole.

The third tale on the Seattle pole is illustrated



by the figures under the top raven. They are a woman holding her frog child, head downward, his little legs sticking up just under her chin. Below, also head downward, is her frog husband. One of the crests owned by the Raven clan is Frog, and there are many tales of the marriages and adventures of clan ancestors with frogs.

A young woman made some derogatory remarks about frogs. One of them heard her



RAVEN ON SEATTLE POLE, SHOWING THE STRAIGHT BEAK.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

and changed himself into a personable young man who then courted her. She married him and was taken to his home. Many young people were there and she was very happy until she accidentally discovered that their home was under a lake and her husband and his people were frogs. She then sent her children to her human father's home. When the little frogs came into the house they were chased away. They kept coming back, and their grandfather began to suspect something, so he sent his human nephews to watch where the frogs went. They saw his daughter sitting in the middle of the lake with her frog husband and children. The nephews told their uncle what they had seen. They then drained the lake, killing her frog husband and rescuing the daughter and her frog children. She had eaten so much frog food, however, that she did not live long. Her children, though they behaved for a long time like frogs, finally became completely human and never went back to their frog home.

Mink is the only figure on the pole for which there are no tales, although he is occasionally mentioned in the company of Raven. Mink was a guardian spirit, or spirit helper, of a Tlingit ancestor who was a shaman. When a young man determined to train as a shaman, he isolated himself from the village, took frequent baths, fasted and dried himself with spruce boughs or devil's club



branches to remove any contamination of the human smell about himself. He then concentrated on the spiritual, hoping that a spirit would appear to him. And so it happened with this particular ancestor as a young man: he acquired Mink as his spirit helper. When he attended a patient he danced, sang, and called his spirit helper to diagnose the illness. The spirit helper revealed whether the patient had lost his or her soul or whether a foreign object had been injected into the patient's body. At that point the shaman could try to remedy the situation and cure the patient. Because men in solitude, preparing to become shamans, never thereafter revealed their experiences, their visions, or the nature of their guardians, we have no details of these spirit helpers in legend.

There are many "totem poles" in the Puget Sound area. They have been carved by white men or by Native Americans unfamiliar with their tribal history; many were made to order for particular locations or purposes. Their designs do not refer to lineage-owned tales or crests. A number of poles, carved by a Puget Sound Indian, are carved on all four sides of square timbers; one even includes a likeness of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Today, the Seattle totem pole is one of the few poles in a public setting carved by native craftsmen to honor a deceased relative and illustrating the myths and events of a specific lineage. The myths and legends of the totem figures on the Seattle pole described here are just a few of many myths owned by the lineage of Chief-of-All-Women.



"RAVEN TOTEM"
CHIEF SHAKES FAMILY TOTEM ERECTED 1897
AT WRANGELL, ALASKA.

PHOTO BY J.C. WOOD

NORTHWEST COAST TOTEM POLE ART

The carving of totem poles was brought to a high stage of development by the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Their sculpture and relief carving in wood, stone, and bone ranged from tiny ornaments to massive works of heroic proportions. Single sculptured figures eight feet tall and spectacular carved totem poles as high as sixty feet graced their villages.

Decorative carving was characteristic of the entire North Pacific coast and a well-established art form by the eighteenth century. Explorers commented on the elaborate carving that adorned the houses, both inside and out, and the beautifully executed household utensils and furniture. They collected baskets, boxes, woven hats, blankets, and tools that are now housed in museums in Europe, the Soviet Union, South Africa, and the United States. There is no mention of tall carved poles in their reports. Totem poles can be traced to the latter half of the 1880s, however, when metal cutting tools acquired from European traders facilitated the work of carving large timbers. Alejandro Malaspina, an eighteenth-century explorer, visited Yakutat Bay in Tlingit territory with an artist who drew pictures of carved posts decorated in the style of the boxes and posts identified from this period. A large wolf holding a burial box on his knees is a typical figure.

RAVEN WITH SUN DISK AROUND HIS FACE, AT WRANGELL, ALASKA. FROM THE TOP: SPRUCE ROOT HAT, CREATOR IN HUMAN FORM, SUN BOX, RAVEN WITH SUN HALO, RAVEN'S MOTHER, RAVEN IN BIRD FORM, TIDE WATCHER.

Courtesy Photo Collection, University of Washington Library

The moist, heavily wooded coastal area provided the peoples of the Northwest with readily available large trees. The size, durability, and straight grain of cedar made it especially desirable for carving. Sound timber close to the beach was plentiful and furnished ample wood for houses, canoes, household furniture, implements, and tools. These were carved with great skill and artistry in pre-European times when shell, beaver incisors, and stone were the only materials available for cutting blades. The same painstaking and artistic work was done on knife handles, halibut hooks, and fish clubs as on large canoes and elaborate equipment for ceremonial use, and the same carved and painted designs decorated them.

When Captain Cook first made contact with the Indians, he found them using a few bits of iron and wondered where it came from. There has been speculation that the Indians learned to utilize iron from ancient junks from the Orient, wrecked on their shores. Another theory holds that small pieces of iron were traded down the Alaska coast, with the source being Siberia. The Indians themselves, however, offered no answers and have no legends of where the iron originated.

By the mid 1700s explorers and fur traders were exchanging pieces of iron for sea otter skins. The Indians fashioned iron into blades for their adzes and draw knives, and carving flourished as never before. Larger canoes and finer houses were built, along with a greater number and variety of boxes, dishes, and decorative articles. Axes, introduced by the traders at about the same time, were a great help in felling and trimming trees and the tall totem pole made its appearance. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there were probably thousands of tall poles in existence, all made within a period of about fifty years. Skidegate, on the Queen Charlotte Islands, had dozens of tall poles facing the water and many more around the houses back from the beach. Kasaan, on Prince of Wales Island, had at least one pole in front of every house in the village. In 1920 when an anthropologist visited the abandoned village of Tongass, he counted 120 carved columns. These were mainly fifteen- to twenty-foot house posts



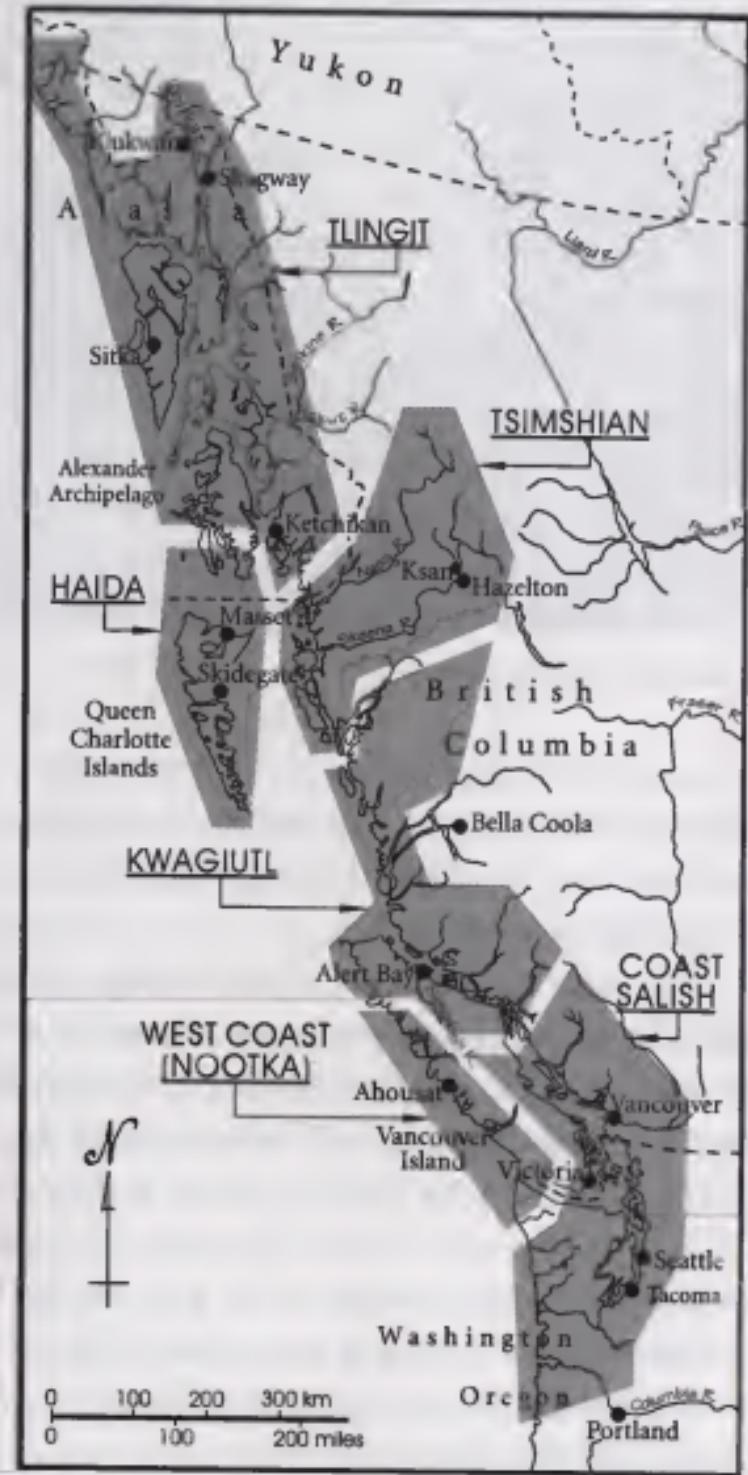
EYE OF RAVEN, SEATTLE POLE.

and memorial or grave markers. Most were still standing, though a few had rotted and fallen. In the dryer interior of British Columbia poles had survived somewhat longer.

When they were first carved in the early part of the century, the totem poles were set against the front of the house with an entrance cut through the base of the pole; later they were placed free of the house fronts, facing the beach, as many as three or four in front of a single house. The sides and front were the only carved portions of the pole; the back was frequently hollowed out into a shell. Poles were placed where guests, arriving in the village by canoe, could view the carved front.

The raising and dedication of a totem pole was always an elaborate affair, worthy of a potlatch of gifts and feasting. Guests invited to the potlatch dug the hole and set the pole in place, while their hosts explained the figures on the pole, most of which illustrated tales of past tribal events. The legends were dramatized in songs and dances, and the performers wore costumes and carved masks. Thus the success of the potlatch demanded and encouraged dramatic and artistic talents: composers, singers, actors, drummers, and dancers, as well as a stage director. The hosts offered food, and secured their reputations by the extravagance of their gifts.

Missionaries were scornful of the potlatch and of the poles themselves, interpreting them as heathen symbols. They destroyed some poles and discouraged this style of carving. In addition, white



MAP OF NORTHWEST COAST
INDIAN TRIBES

frontiersmen developing the fish and timber industries in the area found the potlatch wasteful and heathen and the men involved in the intricate and time-consuming preparations unreliable at work. In this climate, around the turn of the century, it is not surprising that government officials in the United States and Canada voted to outlaw the practice, which nearly ended the carving of poles and masks and other works of art. Early in the 1950s, when this ban was removed, a revival of interest in their heritage among native Americans again brought the potlatch into public view.

Traditionally, the design of the totem pole was inspired by and referred symbolically to the incidents described in the mythology and legendary history of the people. Many of these tales are familiar throughout the Northwest Coast area, and different versions of each are known and related, even in the same community of villages. Other tales are the special property of a group of people who consider themselves descended from a common clan ancestor, and these stories relate experiences and adventures of members of the group. Stories are best known by those to whom they belong, since they are never fully told to outsiders.

The Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian all have matrilineal clan organization, tracing their descent only through their mothers. Their poles thus belong to a group (called a lineage) of brothers and sisters and the children of sisters. A man and his wife belong to different lineages and the children take the name of their mother's lineage. Many Northwest Coast lineages are related to each other and form what is called a clan, sharing a name and crests or totems. Every Tlingit and Haida, for example, belongs to either the Raven or the Eagle clan; the Tsimshian have four clan divisions: the Ravens, Eagles, Wolves, and Killerwhales. Each division owns tales of their origin and ancestors as well as tangible fishing sites, berry fields, home locations, and hunting grounds.

The figures carved on the pole are drawn from these ancestral tales of lineages. Since many of the characters in native legend could perform marvelous feats such as changing themselves from human beings into frogs, birds, or hemlock

needles at will, the method of depicting them involved symbolizing their supernatural attributes. The artists sought readily recognizable qualities by which to represent the mythical animals whose deeds and adventures belonged to a heroic world, and the form and style became highly conventionalized.

Since a supernatural being could appear in both human and animal form, the figures often combined the characteristics of both. One of the mythological beings about which there are many tales is Raven. Members of the Raven clan believed that their ancestors witnessed certain of Raven's exploits and they therefore could claim the right to tell the tales and illustrate them in carvings and paintings. Sometimes Raven is shown as a bird with straight beak and wings; he also can have human arms and legs and wear a chief's hat. In one carving he has been given both bird's wings and human arms and hands, but he is recognizable by his straight beak.

The Thunderbird was also widely believed in as a supernatural being. He was always depicted as a bird with large, turned-down beak. When he was hungry he went to the sea, picked up a whale in his talons, and took it to the top of a mountain to eat. Thunder came from the throb of the bird's wings as he flew and lightning from the flash of his eyes. (Occasionally the whale is also depicted, and it is said that whale bones can still be seen on the tops of mountains.)

Aside from Raven and Thunderbird, other characters frequently appearing in Northwest Coast carving and sculpture are Bear, Wolf, Eagle, Blackfish or Killerwhale, Salmon, Frog, and Beaver. Some generalizations will help to identify the various creatures.

Beaks identify birds or their anthropomorphic forms. Raven's beak is straight, Eagle's and Thunderbird's curved, and Hawk's turns into his mouth. A raven's beak on a human face represents Raven, the hero, in human form. On the Seattle totem pole Raven is depicted as a bird, carrying the moon in his beak. On a pole in Wrangell, Alaska, illustrating the same story, he is given human ears to establish his supernatural

character and the sun disk surrounds his face. On this same pole his mother is shown in bird form though the story relates that she was human. His grandfather is shown in bird form on both poles and is described as an anthropomorphic being.

Killerwhale can be symbolized simply by the portrayal of a dorsal fin; his other distinguishing marks are a blunt face, sharp teeth, round eye, and white band across the nose, as well as the small face on the blowhole. Artists do not clearly distinguish the various species of whale, killerwhale, and black-fish in their art.

Mink is not often illustrated. On the pole in Seattle his slender, long tail, turned up on his stomach, is the chief identifying mark; otherwise he could be mistaken for a bear. Bear and Wolf are not always easily distinguishable, since both have long, narrow snouts, sharp teeth, and sharp claws.

On the other hand, many figures are easy to identify, whether on a spoon handle or a fifty-foot totem pole. One of these is Frog, usually carved realistically and painted green with white or black markings to correspond to the animal's natural coloring. Beaver can be recognized by two large incisors and a paddle-shaped, crosshatched tail.

An animal's ears are stylized and placed to either side of the top of the head, while the ears of an ordinary human being are anatomically correct as to shape and placement. A human face with these stylized animal ears usually portrays some being with both animal and human properties.

Eyes are extensively used in native carving. They may symbolize hip, shoulder, or other joints, nostrils, the inner ear, the blowhole of a whale, or the palm of a hand. They are sometimes elaborated into faces for decorative effect. The eye embodies the concept of the life or vital principle: in the ear, it symbolizes the faculty of hearing; in the nostril, a keen sense of smell; in the joints, vitality or body movement. On the Seattle pole, faces in profile are carved and painted in the ears of the bottom figure, Raven's grandfather, typifying the all pervading powers of this mysterious being.

In placing his design on the article he is decorating, the artist follows certain traditional principles of arrangement. Since symbols are emphasized

at the expense of less essential parts of an image, most body parts of figures can be eliminated. Faces and heads are often very large and limbs small or even left out altogether. No attempt is made to show perspective or relative size, or to achieve anatomical accuracy. Where several characters are illustrated, such as on the side of a box or totem pole, they are telescoped into each other and so arranged as to cover the whole space available. To satisfy aesthetic requirements the artist does not hesitate to take his subject apart and rearrange it, suppressing or omitting what he considers unimportant and exaggerating dominant elements.

One principle of native design is that all decorated spaces be filled, so that small figures or purely formal motifs can be added where necessary. The latter device is particularly noticeable on boxes where a face is placed in the center of the panel, and stylized claw, face, eye, joint, and feathers fill in the remaining space.

On totem poles the figures are often telescoped together, folded and shortened, or placed one on the other. Figures are generally carved facing forward. Frog, Whale, and occasionally Beaver are notable exceptions for they often hang head downward. Human figures carved head down indicated either a debtor or a slave and were used to humiliate or disgrace some lineage. The account of the debt owed the pole owners was always made public when the pole was set up.

Since the Forest Service started work on restoring totem poles and other examples of Northwest Coast woodcraft, interest in Native American art has been greatly stimulated. Native Americans have been quick to appreciate the effort to preserve their art and have agreed to transfer the poles to central locations where they may be incorporated into national monuments. Master carvers, who learned to carve in their youth, pass the art and the complex, sophisticated symbolism of the rich mythology to the next generation.

TOTEM POLES IN SEATTLE



DOWNTOWN SEATTLE



**OCCIDENTAL PARK TOTEM POLES AND FIGURES
OCCIDENTAL AVENUE SOUTH, BETWEEN SOUTH
WASHINGTON AND SOUTH MAIN STREETS**

Two 12-foot figures, abstracted from the aboriginal forest setting where they would be at home, now face each other in an alien urban landscape. Tsonoqua (carved in 1973) is a mythical forest being, who tries to lure children to her attractively furnished house so that she may eat them. Mothers would tell their miscreant offspring, "If you're not good, Tsonoqua will get you!" Fortunately, the giantess was slow-witted and rarely successful in her quest for tender young flesh. She is traditionally depicted, as here, with a huge head, pendulous breasts, outstretched hands and pursed lips through which she cries "Hu hu" to attract her would-be victims.

Opposite is a giant figure of a standing Bear (carved in 1974), rendered with characteristic Northwest Coast fierceness.

Nearby are two poles. One, twenty feet tall, depicts Man Riding on Tail of Whale (carved 1971).



It is difficult to know whether the expression on the man's face is ecstasy or terror, but given the fact that the one sometimes transforms into the other, there may be a suggestion of both. The second pole, Sun and Raven (carved 1973), is yet another sculptural rendering of the myth of Raven stealing the sun and the moon. At the top of this 32-foot pole, carved for the 1974 Spokane World's Fair, is Raven with Moon in his beak, and at the bottom is Raven holding Sun. Immediately beneath is the front of a Northern-style bent-corner box, in which Sun and Moon had been kept until Raven liberated them.

All four of these sculptures were carved by Duane Pasco. Three—Tsonoqua, Bear, and Sun and Raven—were commissioned by Seattle art dealer and entrepreneur Richard White for his restaurant, Kiana Lodge, on Agate Passage. White sold Kiana Lodge and donated the sculptures to the Pioneer Square Association, which raised them in their present location in 1987-88.







**VICTOR STEINBRUECK PARK
PIKE PLACE MARKET TOTEM POLES,
WESTERN AVENUE AT VIRGINIA STREET**

Two 50-foot poles tower over the small park dedicated to the memory of a distinguished Seattle architect, and over the nearby Pike Place Market. Framed by the panorama of Puget Sound and Olympic Mountains, they make a statement about the connection between this city and a Native heritage that stretches along the northerly waterway from here to southeastern Alaska.







One pole is in classic Haida design, the figures strongly sculptural and organically connected. At the top is Raven, holding a Salish spindle whorl of the sort widely used by Puget Sound Native people; then a humanoid figure holding a copper, which is a kind of shield fashioned of that metal and signifying great wealth; then the head of a

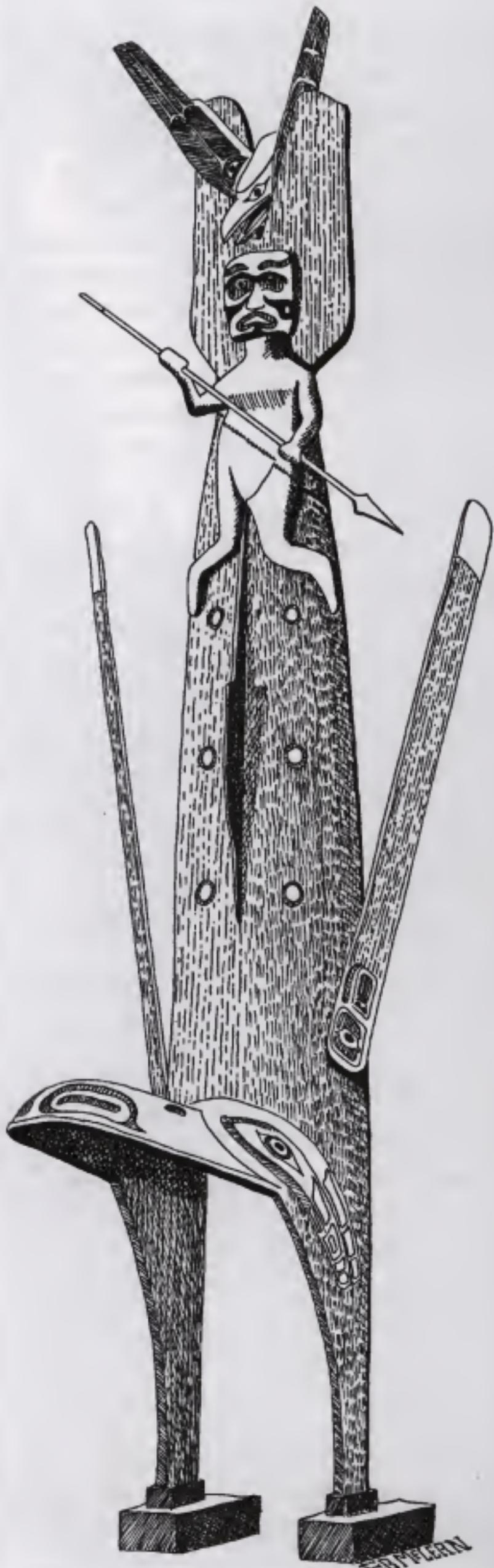
smaller humanoid; Killer Whale (sometimes called Blackfish), with a human face in its blowhole; the head of a small Raven; and, finally, Bear holding Hawk. Based on a concept by Marvin Oliver and a tree selected by Oliver, the carving was done by James Bender.

In contrast, the second pole is bare of representation except at the very top where there are two eight-foot figures representing a man and a woman in farming dress, honoring the Pike Place farmers' market below. Each figure wears a badge with the inscription, "Honored Farmer-1984." James Bender, also the carver of this pole, designed it with the help of architect Victor Steinbrueck.

**WASHINGTON STATE CONVENTION
AND TRADE CENTER
800 CONVENTION PLACE**

On Level 1, between the two main escalators, is a classic Kwakiutl entrance pole, an object worthy of the term "monumental" art. It once made an impressive, even fearsome, entrance to the Sea Monster House at Seattle's Pacific Science Center. That Center's artifacts have more recently been transferred to the University of Washington, but since the Burke Museum at the University cannot accommodate its height, this pole is on more or less permanent loan in its present location. Here, between the vertically rising escalators, it looks even taller than its 35 feet in space barely high enough to accommodate it without alteration. It was installed in this spot with appropriate ceremony in mid-summer 1994.

The pole is in the shape of Whale, head down, mouth open wide to create a seven-foot entrance through which, in traditional times, resident clan members would have gone in and out of the house. Whale has a rather short and narrow dorsal fin, in contrast to the long upward sweep of its pectorals. The shapes of the fins and the white spots painted on the animal's body are all characteristics of a baleen whale (*gwoyim*, in Kwakwala). Riding on Whale's back is the full figure of a whaler holding a harpoon. Above the man's head and emerging out of Whale's flukes is Raven, wings extended,



beak open, almost as if in attack. This is Raven with an attitude!

This entrance pole is a detailed reproduction of one originally owned by the Scow family for its hereditary house on Gilford Island, British Columbia. The formline shapes on Whale's mouth, face, and pectorals, on the whaler's face, and on Raven add the distinctive Kwakiutl green to the red and black that characterize more northerly art. The original pole was carved by the distinguished Kwakiutl artist Mungo Martin; the reproduction by Steve Brown, with the assistance of Martin Stewart, Michael Freeman, and Bill Holm.

MONTLAKE CUT TOTEM POLE

**2700 24TH AVENUE EAST, NORTH OF THE
MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND INDUSTRY,**

Chief John Wallace (1861-1951), a Kaigani Haida from Hydaburg, Alaska, was a noted carver of totem poles and canoes. In addition to this pole, which he originally carved in 1937 for a site near a cannery on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, two others stand at the entrance to the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., and another at Seward and Sixth in Juneau.

The pole on the Montlake Cut was brought to Seattle and stored after the cannery closed; restoration began in 1981. The pole was installed in its present location as a gift to the City of Seattle in 1983.

The pole depicts the "Story of North Island" in British Columbia at a stormy time when the island's Haida residents were without food. An old woman, who was abandoned when the villagers moved to a new fishing site, was provided with food by Eagle. When Bear stole the food, the spirits gave the woman a son to help her. The boy, aided by a man in a dream, killed the bear, and Eagle conferred upon the boy the eagle's own special power as a hunter. One night the old woman and the boy awoke to find themselves no longer in their shack but in a big house, with carvings inside and three totems in front.

According to the story, these were the first carvings and totems that were ever seen among



the Haida. The man who made the house and did the carving gave the woman and the boy medicine for them and their descendants to use when a good artist or carver was wanted.

Figures on the pole are Eagle at the top, with a fish at its feet; the old woman; Bear with the boy between its legs; another Eagle holding a seal, one of the animals provided as food to the woman; a bird-like figure, probably Raven; and the figure of a man at the bottom, probably the man who made the big house and its carvings.

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, BURKE MUSEUM
NORTHEAST 45TH STREET AND 17TH AVENUE
NORTHEAST**

In 1985, in preparation for celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, curator-emeritus Bill Holm completed the large whale sculpture that sits at the Museum's entrance. Begun by Holm in 1970 or 1971, it lay unfinished and without a fin until shortly before the 1985 celebration. It has since become the Burke's official logo. The sculpture is a faithful replica of a nineteenth-century grave monument in the Haida community of Howkan, Alaska. Called "Single Fin," the monument was commissioned by Moses Kool-Keet as a memorial to his uncle. The body of the whale is still in place at the grave site in Howkan, but the old fin is inside the Burke Museum, at some time in the past shortened by half from its original twelve-foot height perhaps because of wood rot. Beside the fin is a copy of an 1897 picture by Juneau photographers Lloyd Winter and Percy Pond, showing the monument in place at Howkan. The sculpture was even then betraying signs of age.

The two totem poles standing nearby, just off the circle drive at the museum's entrance, are virtual textbook instances of classic Northern Coast monumental art—classic because of the intrinsic fineness of their design and execution, and because they are superb representatives of two different cultural styles, the Tsimshian on the left, the Haida on the right. Both are replicas of distinguished old

poles, carved for Burke Museum display some years ago by Bill Holm.

What typifies the Tsimshian pole is the discreteness of the fully sculpted figures that sit one on top of another. A human figure, grasping the dorsal fin of a supernatural Sea Bear, sits at the pole's top; then the Sea Bear itself; next Raven, or a mountain hawk; next Bear, with somewhat human characteristics, sitting on the head of yet another Bear at the bottom. The original, dating from 1880, was a memorial to a deceased chief, raised on the occasion of the public announcement of his successor. It stood until 1918 in the Niska village of Gitlakhdamks on the Nass River in northern British Columbia, and may have been destroyed under missionary influence.

What typifies the taller Haida pole is the somewhat flatter surface of the carving and the complex interconnections of the figures up and down its length. That complexity is easily seen in a careful "reading" of the pole. At its apex are two watchmen, wearing hats with tall potlatch rings, who are raised to their elevated position so as to be able to warn the pole's owner of any approaching threat. The legs of the watchmen on either side pass through the ears of Heron immediately below. A man wearing a whale's skin sits on Heron's head. On the body of Heron is a human figure holding onto the bird's tail, which bears the image of a bird's head. Next, a woman wearing a labret sits on Whale's back, holding onto its dorsal fin. She and the smaller human figures on either side wear hats with potlatch rings, similar to those on the two watch men. Around her hat is the representation of Tsamaos, the river snag, enemy of the careless canoe paddler. The bottom figure is that of a large Killer Whale, with the figure of a bird on its flukes.

The original, probably dating from 1870, was the frontal pole for a chief's house in the village of Haina (New Gold Harbor on Maude Island) in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The pole's images most likely represent crests belonging to the families of the chief and his wife.

Towering over the Burke's main-floor entrance hall are two totem poles. On the left is Dzoonokwa, a cannibal giantess with pursed lips and pendulant





breasts. This is a copy, carved by Bill Holm, of an early twentieth-century pole in the Kwakwaka'wakw village of Gwayusdums on Gilford Island, British Columbia, which was raised originally as a form of public shaming for an unpaid marriage debt. The three coppers, held by the giantess, were probably added to the original a few years later when the debt was repaid.

The pole on the right is topped with the likeness of a deceased Tlingit chief sitting on the replica of a bent-corner box. On the original pole, carved at Old Wrangell, Alaska, before 1850, the box was actually the mortuary container in which the chief's remains were interred. This copy was also carved by Bill Holm.

Beyond the two poles, and serving as the entrance to a main exhibit area, is a monumental Kwakwaka'wakw house front. Once a part of the Sea Monster House at Seattle's Pacific Science Center, it was removed a few years ago to make room for more science-related exhibits and has recently come into the possession of the Burke. The house front, bearing an identifying sea monster painted in grand formline design, is a detailed reproduction from a house traditionally owned by the Scow family on Gilford Island.

Outside of the main entrance, along the museum's front walk, is a garden of native flora, featuring food and medicinal plants that have been in traditional use by Native peoples of the area. Each group of plants has identifying information.

**SEATTLE ART MUSEUM
100 UNIVERSITY STREET**

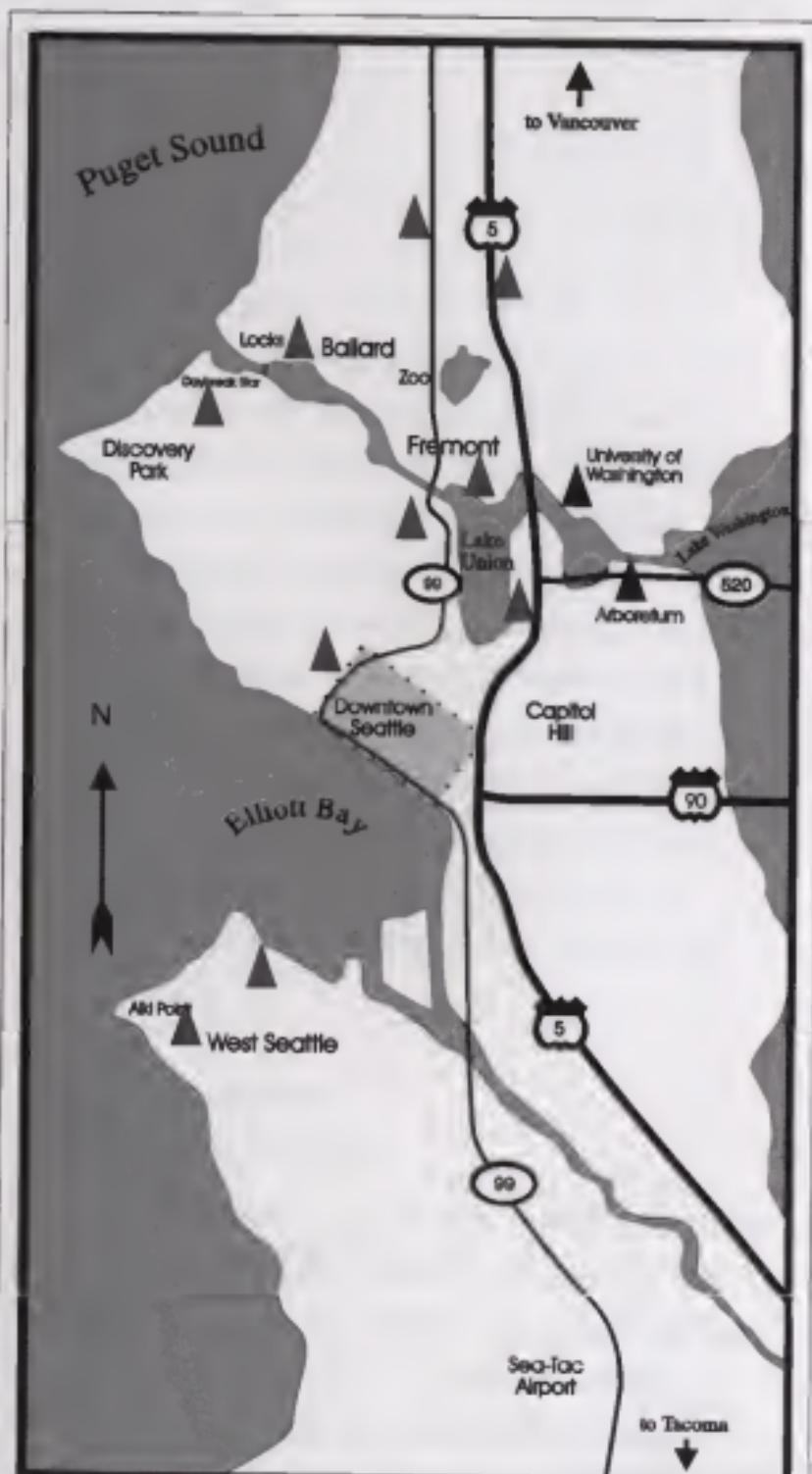
The Northwest Coast collection in this museum is relatively small—some 250 objects—but two things about it are remarkable: the objects themselves are among the most superb instances of Northwest Coast genius to be found anywhere, and some 90 percent of them are actively on view. Its core is the John H. Hauberg Collection, handsomely detailed in illuminating text and superb photographs in *The Spirit Within*, an indispensable resource for anyone with a serious interest not just in this collection but in Northwest Coast art gener-

ally. Third-floor galleries display objects that range from rattles to monumental house posts.

Kwakw̱aka'wakw masks of great dramatic power are concentrated in the center of one room. In another, ceremonial regalia—headdresses, frontlets, a magnificent Chilkat tunic, and much more—make for rich and rewarding viewing.

In addition to its permanent collection, the museum hosts major traveling exhibits of Native arts.

TOTEM POLES IN THE SEATTLE AREA



GREATER SEATTLE

- ▶ Pioneer Square Park, the triangular park at First Avenue and Yesler Way by the pergola.
- ▶ Occidental Park, on Occidental Avenue between Washington and Main Streets.
- ▶ Alaska Square, the small park on the Waterfront at the foot of Washington Street on the north side of Pier 48.
- ▶ Outside Ye Olde Curiosity Shop on Alaskan Way at Pier 54.
- ▶ Victor Steinbrueck Park, on the west side of the Pike Place Market overlooking Elliott Bay, at Virginia Street and Western Avenue.
- ▶ The Seattle Art Museum, Northwest Coast Native American Collection.
- ▶ The Washington State Convention and Trade Center, at the foot of the escalators on the first floor.
- ▶ Seattle Center, on the corner near the Mural Amphitheatre.
- ▶ Seattle Public Schools Administrative and Service Center, 815 Fourth Avenue North, a couple of blocks from Seattle Center's Mercer Street garage.
- ▶ NOAA Pacific Marine Center totem pole, 1801 Fairview Avenue East. Accessibility restricted by NOAA's hours.
- ▶ The Burke Museum, 17th Avenue NE and NE 45th Street, on the University of Washington campus, both inside and out.
- ▶ At the east entrance of the Montlake Cut on the south bank; just north of the Museum of History and Industry's upper parking lot.
- ▶ Ivar's Salmon House on the north side of Lake Union.

- ▶ Seattle Pacific University, near Third Avenue West and Nickerson. The totem pole is by Alexander Hall nestled under two large cedar trees by the parking lot.
- ▶ Totem House Fish and Chips, 3058 NW 54th Street, across from the entrance to the Locks.
- ▶ Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Discovery Park, west of the locks.
- ▶ Evergreen Washelli Cemetery, 11111 Aurora Avenue North, near the parking lot on the south side of the office.
- ▶ Belvedere Viewpoint, Admiral Way at SW Olga Street in West Seattle.
- ▶ West Seattle Rotary Vista Park, 35th Avenue SW at SW Alaska Street.
- ▶ Northgate Mall, by the entrance at Northgate Way and Third Avenue NE.
- ▶ Tillicum Village on Blake Island.
- ▶ The Suquamish Museum on Route 305, west of Winslow.

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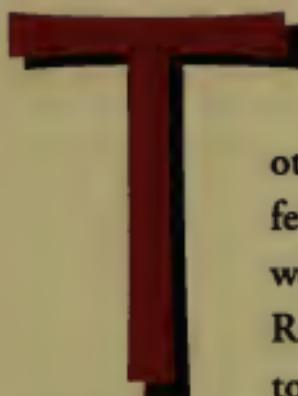
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totem poles are a spectacular feature of the Pacific Northwest's Indian Heritage. Rising to heights of up to sixty feet, they are tribes' vertical legends embodied in ravens, whales, frogs, and other creatures.

In a city identified with public art, one of Seattle's best-known pieces is its first: the Pioneer Square totem pole. Erected in the name of Chief-of-all Women, it is one of only a few poles dedicated to a woman. The original pole was carved by Tlingit Indians, stolen by Seattle businessmen, and, in 1899, erected in Pioneer Square. Fire and rot destroyed the first pole in the late 1930s and the present pole was erected in July, 1940. Long familiar to residents and tourists, the pole attracts the admiration and curiosity of all who see it.

Anthropologist Viola Garfield's classic book about the Seattle Totem Pole is recreated in this new edition. It captures the vitality and humor of the ancestral tales and makes this a useful volume for both the scholar and the general reader. *Seattle's Totem Poles* features Dr. Garfield's original text with additional photographs, information about other poles, and maps so readers can locate them.



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